



EXHIBITION JAPAN DREAMS

TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, EDGAR DEGAS,
CLAUDE MONET, VINCENT VAN GOGH,
HIROSHIGE, HOKUSAI ET UTAMARO



CURATOR OF THE EXHIBITION


Jean-Christophe Hubert graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities at the University of Liège, specializing in Modern Art History. He began his career in 1996 with the nonprofit organization Art&Fact and teaches at the Centre de Formation permanente des Classes moyennes et des PME Liège-Huy-Waremme. As a curator or consultant, he has participated in exhibitions at the Musée du Chapitre de Soignies, the Abbaye du Val-Dieu, the Château d'Aigremont, and the Musée d'Art moderne de Liège for the Ministry of Heritage of the Walloon Region. In 2000 he became curator of the Val-Dieu Abbey Museum of Art and History. Inside this magnificent 13th-century building, he will open an exhibition devoted to Rembrandt's engraved works and establish a collaboration with the Rembrandt House in Amsterdam.

A doctoral student at the Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique (National Fund for Scientific Research) of the University of Liège, he then devoted himself to research before finally devoting himself to curating exhibitions. He developed this orientation within the nonprofit organization Collections et Patrimoines. As art director, he led exhibitions such as Pierre-Paul Rubens in Eupen, Leonardo da Vinci in Brussels, and Sos Planet in Liège.

Curator of the Brussels Museum of Letters and Manuscripts until 2012, he participated in the development of this Brussels cultural hub and saw the opening of seven prestigious exhibitions, including Georges Simenon, Bruxelles Capitale des Arts and L'Étincelle surréaliste. Nearly twenty lectures attracted large audiences and prestigious speakers such as Jacques Bredael, Hervé Hasquin, Marc Eyskens, and Patrick Weber.

At the same time, he has developed projects at such notable sites as the Oud-Sint-Jan site in Bruges, the Château de Waroux in Ans, the Malmundarium in Malmedy, and the Pouhon Pierre le Grand in Spa, and he specializes in curating and staging museums and exhibitions.

In 2010, Jean-Christophe Hubert became curator of the Pablo Picasso Collection in Bruges, at the famous site of the former Hôpital Saint-Jean. He has curated exhibitions devoted to Félicien Rops, Auguste Rodin, Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, Jean-Michel Folon, Salvador Dali, Joan Miro, Henri Matisse, Marc Chagall, René Magritte, Pol Bury, and Pierre Alechinsky. He has curated more than 120 exhibitions of 19th- and 20th-century art, including, most recently, the Pablo Picasso exhibition at Palazzo Paesana in Turin. He is the author of more than 30 books on art. His favorite subject is the work and personality of artists in front of their audience.





FOR TOURISM AND SCHOOLS

These exhibitions are an educational tool for exploring art and sharing it with children. The presentation of original works and the use of specific educational tools such as games, crafts, and books provide a fun way to explore an artist, an era, or a technique.

These are not art workshops proper, and the goal is not to learn a technique or artistic style, but rather to stimulate the imagination, educate the child's eye, and have fun doing what the artist does, in order to better understand his or her work. In this way, children learn to see, feel and decode works of art on their own. Art as a way to grow, to learn about others and ourselves. Art for enjoyment. Art to better understand our world, our society, the image it conveys and why. Art that we can dissect to better appreciate it.... Art that helps us learn to live together.

The tools

Children's panels. In the exhibition setting, panels were designed especially for children and games were created especially for them.

Free brochures for families. All families with children will receive a free 12-page booklet with games for their children during the exhibition. Thus, while parents visit the exhibition, children can play games to discover the same works in a different way, with an educational approach. The goal is to make the visit as enjoyable as possible for young people.


A downloadable educational package. To prepare for the visit or to extend the exploration at home, families and schools can download an original educational packet. The download is free of charge.

The different programs offered

For the general public: visit the exhibition with the help of a small "guidebook" and participate in workshops led by project leaders and related to the themes of the permanent and temporary exhibitions.

For school groups: children, divided into small groups, visit the exhibition. The exhibition is led by animators. They encourage children to watch, explore and experience the exhibition, as well as to express themselves and engage in dialogue.

For current and future educators: Guided tour of the exhibition and discussion with project leaders (by appointment).



Better understand those around us

The main goal of this exhibition is to enable the general public, and especially young people and children, to discover art, its history, and its fascination through a concept that meets their expectations. Unfortunately, too many exhibitions are designed without children in mind. The permanent exhibition, designed entirely for children, presents a two-level itinerary that allows children to discover works by Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Miró, Folon, Braque, Magritte, Dali, etc. The route plays an educational role, encouraging visitors to extend their discovery by reading, traveling or visiting other exhibitions...

One of the project's priorities is to desacralize the relationship with art, without oversimplifying it and integrating it into social practices. The goal is to encourage open-mindedness to differences, cultures and the environment by developing an artistic and cultural dynamic among children, families and even the general public.

The goal of this project is to provide an opportunity to learn more about ourselves and those around us. The exhibits are participatory and fun. The entertainers play a key role. They bring the exhibition to life, creating an atmosphere of trust, giving children a voice and encouraging them to listen attentively and warmly so that they can express their feelings about the artworks.



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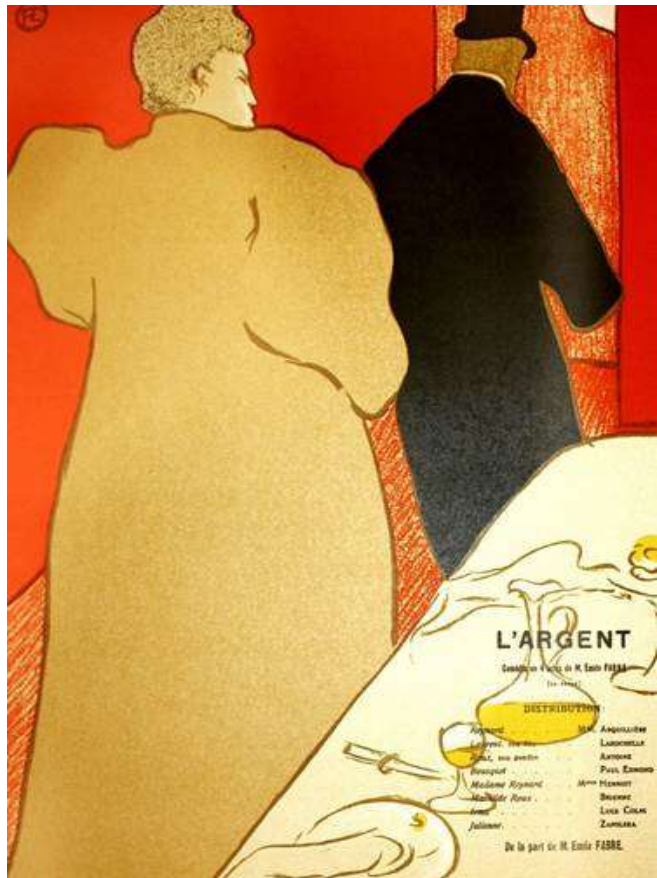
EXHIBITION FEATURES

The exhibition brings together 220 pieces: Japanese prints, etchings, drawings, posters, lithographs and photographs by three Japanese artists: Hokusai, Hiroshige and Utamaro, alongside works by Monet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Degas and Van Gogh, all original and validated by the estates.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

This exhibition presents a selection of Japanese prints by Hokusai, Hiroshige and other masters of ukiyo-e. They depict the landscapes, nature and life of 19th-century Japan... Works by Japanese masters are displayed alongside those by Van Gogh (the only print he made in his lifetime, in 20 copies), Claude Monet (pastels made in Normandy), Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec (the most famous engravings and lithographs of the Belle Epoque).

In 1853, the hitherto closed Japan of the Meiji era opened up to the West... The Japanese took part in the Universal Exhibitions in London in 1862 and Paris in 1867 and 1878. Governments signed political and trade agreements. Travelogues and the importation of Japanese objects enthralled the art world.





First used by art critic Philippe Burty, the term Japonisme refers to an artistic movement spanning some forty years, during which Japanese art and civilization influenced Western artists and writers.

Japanese prints were particularly popular, helping to bring artists such as Hokusai, Hiroshige, Moronobu and Utamaro to the West. In Paris, dealers Siegfried Bing and Tadamara Hayashi made a fortune by organizing the search for and import of rare pieces. In 1889, the École des Beaux-Arts de Paris presented a selection of antique Japanese pieces. In 1884, the industrial traveler and collector of Asian art Émile Guimet donated his fabulous collections to the French state...

Claude Monet, Vincent Van Gogh, Edgar Degas, Auguste Rodin and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec were immediately influenced by a taste for Japanese art. They built up fabulous collections of prints. Their various inspirations focused on the simplification of forms, a taste for sinuous lines, the abandonment of perspective, a love of bright colors and bold framing. They multiply the themes characteristic of ukiyoe, those "images of the floating world" where fleeting impressions and moments of everyday life reign supreme.

Culture to seduce

Japan took part in four of the five World's Fairs held in Paris between 1855 and 1900. Decided by the Shōgun Tokugawa Yoshinobu, the very first participation in the French editions was in 1867. The other three (1878, 1889 and 1900) were organized during the reign of Emperor Mutsuhito.

The value of such participation is obvious: in the Universal Exhibitions of the time, the best of what each participating country could show the world in terms of industry, commerce and art was brought together. Thus, far beyond "merely" celebrating the centenary of the French Revolution, France in 1889 wanted to assert its superiority in the mastery of steel. The Eiffel Tower was born. In 1900, the aim was to showcase the unrivalled skills of steelwork combined

with those of stone and glass. The Grand Palais was built, magnificently combining all three. The Japanese quickly realized that taking part in these World's Fairs would enable them to discover the best of many countries in one place, and thus all the knowledge they needed to accelerate their development and modernization. This included not only technical knowledge, but also human knowledge, with the designers, producers and exporters of these new technologies.

World's Fairs

Thanks to Japan's presence at these four World Fairs and the thousands of objects presented in all arts and crafts, a passion for Japanese art developed among the French public at large. At the same time, the immense interest shown by professional artists, and above all painters and art critics, helped turn this passion into a veritable movement that would last for some sixty years. This was the birth of Japonism, whose economic and



financial interest in Japan must also be taken into account. Seduced by this culture in general, and by art and art-related objects in particular, Europeans quickly became numerous and enthusiastic customers. In this way, they contributed to Japan's enrichment in foreign currency, giving the country much greater means to finance its development.

The term "Japonisme"

First used in 1872 by collector and critic Philippe Burty, the term "Japonisme" in art history refers to "the influence exerted by Japan on Western art from the second half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century". However, this definition needs to be qualified. Japonism was not initiated by Japan itself, and European art lovers and artists began to take an interest in Japanese works long before the start of the Meiji era.

In the 1850s, the signing of trade treaties between Japan and several Western countries, followed by the Meiji Restoration, represented a turning point in the history of Japonism. In Paris, stores specializing in Far Eastern imports multiplied, attracting an ever-growing number of enthusiasts. At the same time, veritable circles of "Japanesists" sprang up in the capital, bringing together artists, collectors, and men of finance and industry. Their meetings and exchanges played a decisive role in the spread and assimilation of Japanese art in France and the rest of Europe.

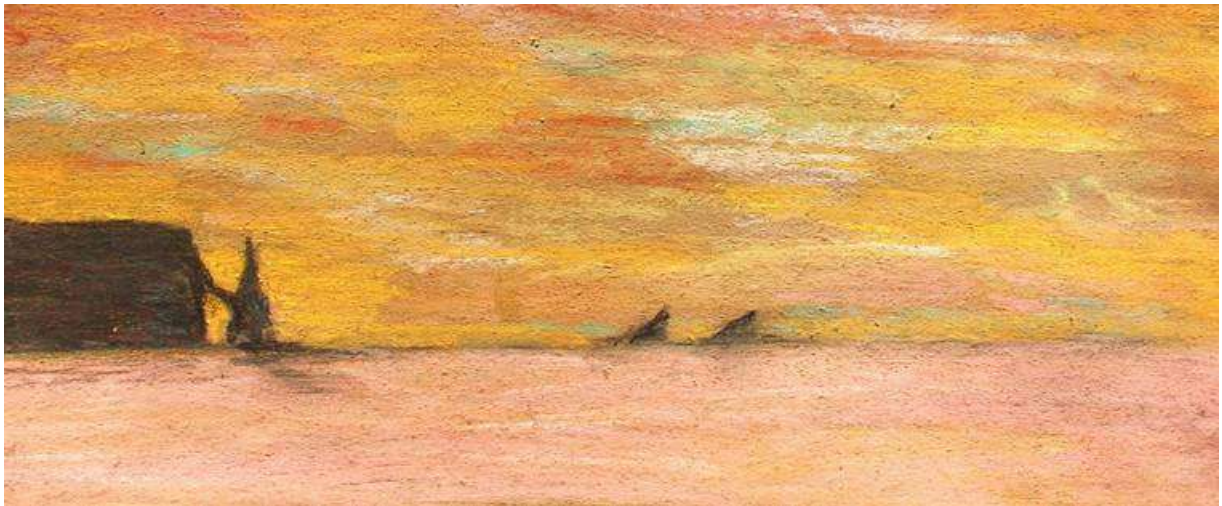
Thus, at the end of the 19th century, Japonism went from being an epiphenomenon to a massive wave, deeply permeating most of the major currents of modern art, from Impressionism to Art Nouveau, and extending through to Art Deco and post-war abstraction. From the visual arts, primarily painting and engraving, to the applied arts, architecture and garden design, Japonism is complex and plural. Just as it would be reductive to conceive of Japanese art in all its complexity and variety as a stylistic unit, Japonism cannot be summed up in a single expression. It's these different forms of expression that we're going to explore...



The influence of Japanese prints on late 19th-century painting

European painters were about to discover a totally unknown continent. They were particularly attracted by the unusual charm of ukiyoe prints, literally the school of "Scenes from the Floating World". Ukiyoe prints refer to the pleasure districts of Edo, today's Tokyo. They depict Kabuki theater actors, landscapes, erotic scenes and many other aspects of Japanese culture. It was Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) and above all Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) who most impressed the painters of the last quarter of the 19th century, who were particularly sensitive and open to novelty. Edmond de Goncourt, in his seminal monograph, writes that this generation "victoriously removed their country's painting from Persian and Chinese influences through a virtually religious study of nature, rejuvenated it, renewed it, and made it truly all-Japanese".

The open air



Like Impressionism, modern Japanese printmaking is above all an art of the "plein air" landscape. Gustave Courbet, Edgar Degas, Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet and Vincent Van Gogh recognize twins in these Japanese artists. Hiroshige and Hokusai communed with the primitive forces of nature, capturing the ambiguous beauty of the elements, like the famous "Great Wave of Kanagawa", whose majestic rollers seem to turn into tentacles. In the text accompanying his Hundred Views of Mount Fuji, Hokusai wrote: "At a hundred, I will have definitively reached a marvellous level, and, at a hundred and ten, each point and each line of my drawings will have a life of its own". Long before the Impressionists, the masters of Ukiyoe "left the studio" and roamed the countryside in pursuit of light, seeking to unravel the mystery of its immaterial beauty.

Space organization

The Japanese treatment of space is also a great source of inspiration. As evidenced by *The Revenge of the Forty-Seven Ronin*, Hiroshige studied European perspective closely, but rethought it freely. He encouraged the formal emancipation of the Impressionists. Freed from the shackles of drawing, European painting could concentrate on color and movement. The luminous undulation so characteristic of Impressionist paintings thus finds, if not its origin, at least a profound echo in Ukiyoe artists. In the same way, the near-abolition of the human figure in favor of the landscape by certain Impressionists resonates with the place accorded to man in Asian thought. Man is not the center of the world, but only one of its components. Exoticism aside, the impact of Japanese art on European painters at the end of the 19th century is explained by a close community of approaches. Through the novelty of its motifs, compositions and underpinnings, the revelation of the print certainly acted as a source of inspiration, but above all, it confirmed the Impressionists in their intuitions. In 1893, Camille Pissarro wrote: "These Japanese artists confirm me in our visual bias..."



Claude Monet's impressive collection of prints

Unlike other collectors, Claude Monet's collection was limited to prints (231 pieces) and did not include decorative art objects. This eclectic collection, in terms of the artists represented (around 36), nevertheless focuses on the three masters: Hokusai, Hiroshige and Utamaro. Together, they account for more than half the collection. There are 48 prints by Hiroshige, 46 by Utamaro, and 23 by Hokusai. Among the many artists present are Kiyonaga, Harunobu, Utagawa Kuniyoshi and Utagawa Kunisada with landscapes of the Edo region, Sharaku, a rare and sought-after artist, Eishi and Toyokuni.

Monet's preference was for landscapes, animals, scenes of daily life and Japanese depictions of Westerners. This last theme was not very popular in Europe at the time. Unexpectedly, prints of flowers and birds were not so well represented in Monet's collection, nor were portraits of actors, which were contested by many ukiyoe enthusiasts at the time.

Monet's passion for Japan led him to unexpectedly introduce various Japanese touches into the highly original world he created at Giverny. His borrowings from Japanese art in his gardens are evident in the design of the spectacular "water garden" with its vegetation and famous water lilies. The footbridge spanning this vast expanse of flower-filled water is reminiscent of the wooden bridges so common in Japanese prints. The footbridge illustrates how much the painter shares the vision of the great ukiyoe masters, and how familiar he is with their "floating world".

Van Gogh or the more radical approach to Japanese influence

Faced with the influence of Japan on his work, Vincent Van Gogh's approach differed from that of his contemporaries in being more radical. The painter's passionate personality led him to an approach to prints that went beyond mere aesthetic considerations, in an attempt to touch the very spirit of Japanese art.



During the winter of 1886, Vincent joined Theo in Paris to experience the artistic avant-garde. The French capital was in the midst of the Japanese movement, and his frequentation of the Impressionists, Siegfried Bing's gallery and Père Tanguy's store convinced him of the aesthetic and formal qualities of ukiyoe. Faced with an abundant supply and falling prices from 1886 onwards, Van Gogh took the opportunity to expand his collection. His financial means being limited, he bought prints in batches that cost him at most "3 sous pièce", the equivalent of 15 centimes. He preferred works by Hiroshige or his school. Prints by Utamaro and Hokusai, whose copies are rarer and therefore more expensive, do not appear in his collection. Van Gogh was probably not what one would call an "enlightened" amateur, as Henri Cernuschi or Philippe Burty, for example, might have been at the time. He himself concedes his shortcomings in the field, declaring that a serious collector would no doubt be "a little shocked and pity my ignorance and bad taste". For his choices, he relies on instinct and the advice of dealers, foremost among them Siegfried Bing and his associate Nephtalie Levy.



The influence of framing on Degas

Edgar Degas was best known as a painter and pastellist for a significant part of his career, but he was also a talented and prolific printmaker.

Degas admired Japanese prints for their flat colors, motifs, innovative framing devices and asymmetrical compositions. Like Monet and Van Gogh, Degas also had a personal collection of ukiyoe prints. His illustrations of the pleasures and amusements of the red-light districts of Montmartre in Paris recall the "floating world" of Edo, now the Yoshiwara district in Tokyo. His depictions of the Théâtre à l'Opéra and the Folies-Bergère cabaret in Paris are unmistakably reminiscent of the Kabuki theaters in Tokyo and Kyoto.

The Japanese influence in this Degas work can also be seen in the juxtaposition of a standing and a seated figure, the strong diagonal of Mary Cassatt's outstretched right arm and umbrella, and the subject of women taking part in a public leisure activity. The use of a marble doorframe to frame the left side of the image is also inspired by ukiyoe prints. This stylistic element features prominently in prints such as the "Kinryūzan Temple in Asakusa" or Hiroshige's "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo" series.



The influence of compositions on Toulouse-Lautrec

Toulouse-Lautrec was one of those who openly displayed his Japanese style. There's a famous photograph of the painter disguised as a Japanese man, on his knees and with an outrageous squint. This attitude is directly borrowed from Japanese prints, of which Toulouse-Lautrec was a collector like Monet, Van Gogh and Degas. Unlike Monet and Van Gogh, for whom we have historical documents, research has no written proof of the collections of Toulouse-Lautrec and Degas. What is certain is that Toulouse-Lautrec owned copies of Hokusai's manga, and that he also owned prints by Utagawa and especially Utamaro, an album of which

he acquired. He was truly an enlightened Japonista, who read the magazine *Le Japon artistique* published by Siegfried Bing". This monthly magazine reproduced Japanese objects and prints, of which Siegfried Bing was a well-known importer. It appeared from 1888 to 1891.

In the famous "Elles" series, we can see the influence of Utamaro's 1804 "Green House Almanac". This collection of prints depicts Tokyo's Yoshiwara pleasure district, formerly known as Edo, but from the perspective of everyday life, not eroticism. This was one of Utamaro's last works before his death in 1806. It reached France thanks to Edmond de Goncourt, who published it in his book "Utamaro, le peintre des maisons vertes" in 1891. The same year, an exhibition of Japanese prints was held at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. It was undoubtedly at this time that Toulouse-Lautrec became acquainted with them. The "Elles" series of 11 lithographs shows prostitutes at all hours of the day, in banal scenes sublimated by the artist's eye. Not evocative or fantasy-inducing enough for the fin-de-siècle public, who shunned the series, at odds with the voyeurism of contemporary works devoted to these subjects.



Exhibition « Dreams of Japan »
exhibition at Château de Waroux
Liège



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